

## **IN THE CLAIMS**

Claims 1 -17 (Cancelled).

18. (Currently Amended) A method for offering a diminished returns bingo game comprising the steps of:

randomly generating a plurality of bingo cards, each of the bingo cards comprising a plurality of bingo numbers;

displaying at least one bingo card of said plurality of bingo cards;

pre-selecting at least one player bingo card of said plurality of bingo cards by at least one player of the bingo game;

pre-selecting at least one player pattern comprising a quantity of bingo numbers of said at least one pre-selected player bingo card by said at least one player of the bingo game; ~~and~~

randomly generating a plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game to match to said at least one player pattern so that said at least one player realizes a plurality of diminishing awards as the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers of the bingo game increases;

achieving a higher hit frequency for the plurality of awards by said at least one player when the quantity of said at least one player pattern selected by said at least one player on at least one player bingo card is increased; and

decreasing the rate of randomly generating bingo numbers as the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers increases so as to cause greater suspense to said at least one player during the play of the bingo game.

19. (Previously Presented) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 18 further comprising the step of:

providing a random number generator to randomly generate said plurality of bingo cards and to randomly generate said plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game.

20. (Previously Presented) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 18 further comprising the step of:  
providing a plurality of payout tables predetermined by an operator of the bingo game.

21. (Previously Presented) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 18 further comprising the steps of:  
making at least one wager by said at least one player prior to playing the bingo game to obtain at least one player bingo card of said plurality of bingo cards;  
selectively electing by said at least one player at least one alternative player bingo card from said plurality of bingo cards to replace said at least one player bingo card if said at least one player is dissatisfied with said at least one player bingo card of said plurality of randomly generated bingo cards;  
permitting said at least one player to select at least one player pattern of said at least one player bingo card of the bingo game; and  
permitting said at least one player to select at least one alternative player pattern of said at least one alternative player bingo card if said at least one player is dissatisfied with said at least one player bingo card of said plurality of bingo cards.

22. (Previously Presented) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 21 further comprising the steps of:

making at least one additional wager by said at least one player;  
and

selecting at least one additional player pattern of said at least one player bingo card by said at least one player after making said at least one wager, said at least one additional wager independent of any other wager made for said at least one player pattern to permit said at least one player to achieve more than one award in the bingo game.

23. (Previously Presented) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 18 further comprising the steps of:

providing each one of said plurality of bingo cards comprises an array having a plurality of spaces selectively filled with each one of a plurality of numbers;

selecting a predetermined plurality of winning patterns by the operator of the bingo game for said plurality of bingo cards;

comparing each one of the randomly generated bingo numbers of the bingo game to each one of said quantity of bingo numbers of said at least one player bingo card, said plurality of predetermined winning patterns of said plurality of bingo cards eventually matching to said at least one player pattern; and

providing the plurality of awards to said at least one player of the bingo game is determined by the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers of the bingo game required to match said at least one player pattern to said plurality of predetermined winning patterns for said plurality of bingo cards.

24. (Previously Presented) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 20 further comprising the step of:

increasing the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers needed to match said at least one player pattern for at least one award to said at least one player from the plurality of payout tables so that said at least one player achieves a higher hit frequency while maintaining a controllable disadvantage predetermined by the operator of the bingo game.

25. (Cancelled).
26. (Currently Amended) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 20 further comprising the step of: adjusting ~~a~~ the quantity of awards of said plurality of diminishing awards of at least one payout table of the plurality payout tables based on a desired level of profitability.
27. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to Claim ~~[[4]]~~ 30 wherein the bingo game further comprising a plurality of predetermined winning patterns of said bingo game, said at least one player pattern eventually matching to at least one of said plurality of predetermined winning patterns.
28. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to Claim ~~[[4]]~~ 30 further comprising a network of at least one gaming machine wherein a central processor keeps track of payouts on said at least one gaming machine~~[[s]]~~ and adjusts payout tables based on an operator desired level of profitability.

29. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 28 wherein said network of at least one gaming machine accumulates data on the level of profitability of each gaming machine.
30. (Previously Presented) An apparatus configured according to the method of Claim 18.
31. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to Claim ~~[[4]]~~ 30 wherein the apparatus comprises at least one gaming machine.
32. (New) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 18 further comprising the step of:  
providing at least one payout table predetermined by an operator of the bingo game.
33. (New) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 20 further comprising the step of:  
increasing the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers needed to match said at least one player pattern for at least one award to said at least one player from at least one payout table so that said at least one player achieves a higher hit frequency while maintaining a controllable disadvantage predetermined by the operator of the bingo game.
34. (New) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 20 further comprising the step of: adjusting a quantity of awards of said plurality of diminishing awards of said at least one payout table based on a desired level of profitability.

35. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 30 wherein the bingo game further comprising at least one predetermined winning pattern of said bingo game, said at least one player pattern eventually matching to said at least one predetermined winning pattern.
36. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 30 further comprising a random number generator to randomly generate said plurality of bingo cards and to randomly generate said plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game and at least one screen to display at least one bingo card of said plurality of randomly generated bingo cards of the bingo game.
37. (New) A method for offering a diminished returns bingo game comprising the steps of:
- randomly generating a plurality of bingo cards, each of the bingo cards comprising a plurality of bingo numbers;
  - displaying at least one bingo card of said plurality of bingo cards;
  - pre-selecting at least one player bingo card of said plurality of bingo cards by at least one player of the bingo game;
  - pre-selecting at least one player pattern comprising a quantity of bingo numbers of said at least one pre-selected player bingo card by said at least one player of the bingo game;
  - randomly generating a plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game to match to said at least one player pattern so that said at least one player realizes at least one diminishing award as the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers of the bingo game increases;
  - achieving a higher hit frequency for the at least one award by said at least one player when the quantity of said at least one player pattern

selected by said at least one player on at least one player bingo card is increased; and

decreasing the rate of randomly generating bingo numbers as the quantity of randomly generated bingo numbers increases so as to cause greater suspense to said at least one player during the play of the bingo game.

38. (New) The method for offering a diminished returns bingo game according to Claim 37 wherein each one of said plurality of randomly generated bingo cards of the bingo game comprises an array having a plurality of spaces selectively filled with each one of a plurality of numbers.
39. (New) An apparatus configured according to the method of Claim 37.
40. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 39 wherein the apparatus comprises at least one gaming machine.
41. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 39 wherein the bingo game further comprising at least one predetermined winning pattern of said bingo game, said at least one player pattern eventually matching to said at least one predetermined winning pattern.
42. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 39 wherein the bingo game further comprising a network of at least one gaming machine wherein a central processor keeps track of payouts on said at least one gaming machine and adjusts payout tables based on an operator desired level of profitability.

43. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 42 wherein said network of at least one gaming machine accumulates data on the level of profitability of each gaming machine.
44. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 39 further comprising means for randomly generating a plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game wherein, as said at least one player pattern is matched to a quantity of said plurality of randomly generated bingo numbers said at least one player realizes at least one of a plurality of diminishing awards as the quantity of said plurality of randomly generated bingo numbers of the bingo game increases to provide a controllable disadvantage predetermined by an operator of the bingo game.
45. (New) The apparatus according to Claim 44 wherein said means for randomly generating a plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game comprises a random number generator to randomly generate said plurality of bingo cards and to randomly generate said plurality of bingo numbers of the bingo game and at least one screen to display at least one bingo card of said plurality of randomly generated bingo cards of the bingo game.